Title: Disapproval of Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Ordinance and Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill. Resolution- withdrawn Motion for Consideration- adopted

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, the House will take up Statutory Resolution. Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy, the mover of the Resolution.

1458 hours

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY (VISAKHAPATNAM): Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House disapproves the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Ordinance 1998 (No. 17 of 1998) promulgated by the President on 3 September, 1998."

The proposal has come to amend the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948, with the intention to encourage oil exploration. Of course, the idea of the amendment is welcome, but at the same time, the House would also like to know the various facts relating to effective exploration of oil of this country. It is really painful - of course, not specifically, but still I must say - that in the last fifty years, in spite of making all efforts, our country has not been able to produce more than 25 per cent of the total demand of oil in the country. Not only that, after globalisation, the demand has been increasing, but our production of oil within the country is absolutely not increasing compared to the increase in the demand. The wells have been dried and the foreign exchange has been drained. We have been importing heavy quantum of oil.

Now, the most important problem before our country is how to explore the maximum reserves.

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* Published in the Gazettee of India Extraordinary Part-II, Section 2,dated 2.12.98

15.00 hrs. It has been an accepted fact that there is a huge quantum of gas available in our country. For instance, in the Bombay Offshore, we have 330 million tonnes of gas reserves, and in Kerala-Konkan Offshore, we can produce 70 million tonnes of crude oil. In the Cauvery basin and also in Krishna-Godavari basin, we have 100 million tonnes of gas reserves, and there are five million tonnes of gas reserves in Rajasthan. Like this, at various places, we have got gas reserves. How to explore it?

No doubt, this Amendment Bill has been brought with the good intention of reducing the royalty or increasing the royalty depending on the availability of gas, and also to encourage oil exploration. I agree with it. But at the same time, I want the hon. Minister to clearly specify as to how he is going to plan it. We came to know that the largest oil producing company in the United States of America, that is, UNICORN Corporation, the world leader in oil and gas industry, has come forward with a proposal outlining an ambitious five-year plan projects in our country requiring an estimated investment of US 4 billion dollars. They have come forward with a very good ambitious plan.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN (TRICHUR): You have to raise an objection.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :I will raise my objection.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Dr. Subbarami Reddy, please address the Chair.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN :You must say what your objection is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. He is the mover of the Resolution and I have given the chance to him.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Before I raise my objection, I am telling the Minister what he should specify. Then only, I will withdraw my objection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do not argue.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : I would like to clarify to my colleague that my ultimate philosophy is to find out what is useful for the country or what is necessary for this nation and how to attain prosperity and progress. That is my philosophy irrespective of my political affiliation. The burning problem of this nation is how to explore maximum oil. Though I have my objections about this Amendment Bill, I want to highlight some important points. While taking various factors into consideration, the Minister must specify, before this Bill is passed, how he is going to utilise the offer given by the largest oil producing company in the world. One Chinese company, Shri Raghavan's favourite, has come forward to explore our oil-fields. We are very much interested to cooperate, and I am very happy to welcome it. But the moment I said America, he stood up and wanted me to raise my objection. Chinese are the first to come forward to explore oil in our country. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how he is going to utilise these offers to solve our burning problem. That is very important. What are his plans for the next ten years and how much is going to be produced? What are the schemes which they have finalised? There is nothing wrong in utilising anybody's help to explore oil, I mean, whether it is Russia, China, America or any other country. We should not mind that. Ultimately, we want the results.

The next point is that the Minister should explain very clearly how the increase or decrease in royalty, depending on the circumstances, is going to help us. Are there any ten-year plans and how is he going to explore? We are able to meet only 25 per cent of the total demand, and it is not a joke that we are yet to meet 75 per cent of the demand. How can an economically backward country like ours afford so much of foreign exchange? You must convince the nation and this House by explaining how you are going to produce the oil to fill up the gap.

After listening to the Minister and when I get the opportunity, I will say whether I will withdraw my objection or support this Bill.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN: Sir, my objection is on an entirely different ground.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will get a chance after the Minister's reply.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN: The Chairman has allowed me.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY): Sir, the hon. Members who want to speak on the Statutory Resolution have given their names. Once that list is exhausted, I will reply to them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no need to give a chance to everybody. The Mover of the Resolution has already spoken. Now, the Minister will reply, and then I will give a chance to the other Members.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : Sir, my objection is that the Government should not have given to itself the power to fully exempt the royalty by promulgating an Ordinance. How can the Government give to itself this power without the consent of the House? It is wrong.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Minister will refer to it in his reply. The Minister may now move that the Bill be taken into consideration.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY): I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948, be taken into consideration."

Sir, the Mover of the Statutory Resolution, hon. Member Shri T. Subbarami Reddy, has raised certain preliminary objections and also wanted to know as to how far our country would become self-sufficient in oil

production. First of all, I would like to say that if you take into account the growing demand, growing population, the fast pace of development, the depository position of the natural wealth in oil sector will not suffice for our requirement. It is not going to be enough to cope with our demand. We will always be dependent on the import of crude oil.

Once some Western countries came up with the idea that India did not have any oil deposits. Fortunately our Russian friends found that our East and West coasts and also the northeastern parts of our country were having huge deposits of oil which would meet some of our requirement. Accordingly, ONGC, GAIL, IOC and the other national oil companies were established in our country with the cooperation of the Russian experts. Whatever crude we are able to enjoy now at the Bombay High is because of their help. I have to appreciate their help at this juncture.

With regard to exploration effort, ONGC is an organisation which is tirelessly going on with its effort to found oil. They have completed 3-D seismic survey throughout the country including the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the Himalayan ranges. Deep-sea drilling is one of the recent innovations at international level. Our ONGC and other associated companies are going in for deep-sea drilling now. We can only pin hopes on this deep-sea drilling and also the shallow water drilling, particularly in the Krishna, Godavari, and Cauvery basins.

It is not that we have slowed down our efforts. Unfortunately the demand is increasing every year at a projected rate of 7 per cent to 8 per cent. In the Eighth Five Year Plan, our requirement was 74 million tonnes. The estimated demand during the Ninth Plan would be not less than 134 million metric tonnes. Now our import, including crude oil and petroleum products, is only 64 per cent. So, our effort has not slowed down but the demand has overtaken us. I assure the House that our effort will not slow down. We promulgated this Ordinance to accelerate our production.

This Bill was introduced in the last Session but it could not be passed. The Ordinance had to be promulgated because of the urgency for a new exploration licensing policy which would augment private foreign investment and joint ventures in the field of oil exploration in this country.

Sir, for this, we need this kind of an amendment to the existing clause. This is only an enabling provision. By doing so, the House is going to empower the Government to make some adjustments in the rate of royalty and period. Some kind of a power will also be given to the Central Government to exempt where the exploration or the profit sharing exploration was going on and it had failed.

The present position is that only one rate has to be given as royalty to all the petroleum products. Now, according to this amendment, it will vary. The fixation of the royalty will vary from product to product and also by the period for which the royalty is to be fixed. The existing practice is that it is fixed once in a block of three years. Now, it will be fixed every year, or whenever the Government feels, it can fix the royalty.

So, I hope that the whole House will agree with me. This is only an enabling provision, a small amendment. But it will accelerate the production of crude oil in our country with the help of private investment, foreign investment and joint venture.

श्री रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली): हमारे गैस कूपन का क्या हुआ? (Interruptions)

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: That is left with the Speaker... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : If your suggestion is accepted by all the Members, we can pass the Bill without discussion. ... (Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, about the Telephone coupons and the Gas coupons, we will take up the matter separately. There is also some order by the Court... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we will discuss this later.

SHRI MADHUKAR SIRPOTDAR (MUMBAI NORTH-WEST): Directives were given by the hon. Speaker in this regard. What jurisdiction has the Court got there? ...(Interruptions)

SHRI K.S. RAO (MACHILIPATNAM): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I heard with attention what the hon. Minister has expressed and more particularly, his intention is to have increase in the exploration of the hydrocarbons. He was telling that at one point of time, the Americans have said that India will be short of hydrocarbons. There will be no oil and no gas. Well, the Russians have come to our rescue. Anyway, we are happy about it.

But the point before us is that the amendment that you have brought gives so much executive authority that they can misuse this authority regularly. Even where we find that some of the Acts are draconian, some of the traders in the business community have gone to the extent of being responsible for the downfall of certain Governments by their acts, by hoarding and misdeeds. If that were to be the case and if you were to come with so much softness in giving powers to the executive in amending the royalty on any occasion or for any situation, then we can certainly understand about how much misuse will be done by the executive authorities. More particularly, in the oilfields, the people know that a lot of mischief is being done by various executive authorities which runs into thousands of crores or rupees. It is not hundreds of crores or tens of crores. It is running into thousands of crores.

There are allegations that the crucial information is being given only to certain corporations by which they are taking undue advantage.

In certain cases, the share of the oil is so much that some multinationals are getting undue benefits and the transactions also run into thousands of crores of rupees.

We are all aware - it may not be scientific but this is what we feel that gas and oil are available in abundance in the Krishna-Godavari basin. Later, it was told that not oil but only gas was available. A public statement has been made by the hon. Minister as well as others that there will be an abundance of gas in the Godavari basin which could be put to use for generation of power and also for other industries. Till today, we are not aware of anything on this. There has been no allocation more than what was allocated earlier.

I will restrict myself to the amendments made. It is said that different rates will be charged as royalty for the same mineral oil or gas that is explored in different conditions and the difference could even be on a monthly basis. How can there be a check on the misuse by any officer if it is done on a monthly basis? If the hon. Minister were to think about it, he should keep in view encouraging exploration and getting more and more gas and oil to save foreign exchange or utilise the maximum resources. We do understand it, but certain specified prices could be fixed for royalty under a set of different circumstances. So, I only wish that he should not be too liberal in giving authority to executives who will go beyond not only his control but even beyond the control of Parliament.

I am of the opinion that by this amendment Parliament is deprived of the check that they can have on the bad elements in the executive. It is said that the royalty charged will not be more than twenty per cent of the prices at the exploration point. There is also a mention of `the same price'. I want to seek a clarification from the hon. Minister whether there will be some increase also or will there only be a decrease.

The fluctuation of oil prices in the world market are so frequent and so varied that they are unimaginable. Sometimes, there is a fluctuation of even a hundred per cent to two hundred per cent. I do not know whether this particular aspect has been taken into account or not. All these factors were to be taken into account while bringing this amendment. I want the hon. Minister to be more cautious.

Instead of passing this Bill now, he may go back and make an assessment by going into the details himself and keeping in view the situation of the executive authority's misuse of power in this country. I think, it will be more sane for him to do that. I request the hon. Minister to refer it to a Joint Committee of Parliament to decide. I am suggesting this not to come in the way of his objective or intention but to plug the loopholes and restrict the misuse of power by the executive authority.

The third amendment, which deals with empowering and making consequential amendments under section 6 of the Act says, `laying the notifications before Parliament'. This means, giving the executive authority the right to make amendments beyond the purview of Parliament. I think, it is improper to give the executive authority the right of making amendments outside the House.

With these few words, I request the hon. Minister to be more cautious and do the needful by not allowing the officials to misuse the power to the detriment of the nation and the people.

श्री सत्य पाल जैन (चंडीगढ़): सभापति जी, मैं इस बिल के समर्थन में अपनी बात कहने के लिए खड़ा हुआ हूं। अभी मंत्री महोदय ने सदन में इस बिल के सम्बन्ध में काफी विस्तार से जानकारी दी है। ऑयलफील्ड रेगुलेशन एंड डवलपमेंट एक्ट, १९४८ में बनाया गया था। हम जमीन या पानी के नीचे से जो गैस या ऑयल निकालते हैं, उसे किस तरह से रेगुलेट किया जाये, इस कानून का सीधा उसके साथ सम्बन्ध है।

१९४८ से लेकर आज तक समय में बहुत परिवर्तन आया है। इसके साथ-साथ जमीन के नीचे से पानी, गैस, तेल वगैरह निकालने की आवश्यकता बहुत ज्यादा बढ़ी है। उसकी आवश्यकता ज्यादा महसूस हो रही है और हमने इस सारे दौर में बहुत भारी मात्रा में मिनरल्स भी निकाले हैं, गैस निकाली है, तेल निकाला है। आज सारे देश में सबसे अधिक मांग अगर कुछ चीजों की है तो उनमें तेल और गैस भी शामिल है। हर गांव के अन्दर लोग गैस चाहते हैं। तेल की मांग इतनी बढ़ती जा रही है कि एक नहीं, कई बार सरकार को तेल की कीमतें बढ़ानी पड़ी हैं और जिसके कारण से कई तरह की दिक्कतें और परेशानियां आती हैं।

इसकी जो रायल्टी है, जो चीज हम निकालते हैं, उसकी रायल्टी स्टेट गवर्नमेंट को या सैण्ट्रल गवर्नमेंट को जाती है और उस रायल्टी के जाने के लिए जो मुख्य एक्ट है, मेन अनएमेंडिड एक्ट है, उसकी धारा ६ऋसब सैक्शन ४ में दो कंडीशंस ले डाउन की गई थीं। इस सैक्शन के अन्तर्गत केन्द्र सरकार को अधिकार दिया गया था कि वह इस एक्ट के साथ जो शैडयूल है, उसको समय पर एमेंड कर सकती है और एमेंड करके किस स्टेट गवर्नमेंट को कितनी रायल्टी जायेगी और वह कैसे बढ़ेगी, कैसे कम होगी, इसका निर्णय उस शैडयूल के मुताबिक कर सकती थी। इसकी दो कंडीशंस पहले से एक्ट में ले डाउन हैं। एक कंडीशन यह है कि जो रायल्टी दी जायेगी, वह २० परसेंट से ज्यादा मिनरल आयल के बारे में नहीं होगी, पहली कंडीशन इस धारा के अनुसार यह थी और दूसरी यह थी कि इसके सम्बन्ध में आप अगर बढ़ाना चाहें तो तीन साल से पहले इसको नहीं बढ़ा सकते, यानि तीन साल के पहले उस धारा को वैरी कर सकते हैं, यह कंडीशन १९४८ के एक्ट में थी, लेकिन इसकी डिमांड बहुत बढ़ती गई। इसके बारे में कई तरह की दिक्कतें और परेशानियां पैदा होती गईं और इस एक्सप्लोरेशन को तेज करने के लिए गैस और तेल को निकालने के प्रोसेस को तेज करने के लिए भारत सरकार ने एक नई नीति बनाई और जिस नीति का नाम न्यू एक्स्प्लोरेशन लाइसेंसिंग पॉलिसी रखा गया। इस पॉलिसी के अन्तर्गत यह कहा गया तेल निकालने और गैस निकालने के मामले में तेजी लाई जाये और यह जो नई नीति बनी, इस नई पॉलिसी के अन्तर्गत तीन चीजें सरकार ने ले डाउन कीं। पहली, यह कहा गया कि रायल्टी फॉर क्रूड आयल १२.५ प्रतिशत होगी और जो ऑन लैंड एरियाज़ हैं, इस पर होगी और १० परसेंट ऑफ शोर पर होगी, यह इसके अन्दर तय किया गया। यह भी कहा गया कि जो इसकी कैलकुलेशंस की जायेंगी, कि कितनी रायल्टी होगी, उसका कितना एमाउंट होगा, वह कैलकुलेशन इंटरनेशनल प्राइसेज़ के आधार पर की जायेगी, यह नई नीति के अन्दर कहा गया। इसलिए जो नई नीति बनी, उस नई नीति के अनुसार अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों में वहां कितने लेविल पर तेल मिला है, किस जमीन पर चीज मिली है। उन क्षेत्रों के अनुसार, सिचुएशन के अनुसार अलग-अलग रेट हो सकते थे, अलग-अलग रेट तय किये जा सकते थे, लोकेशन के अनुसार, पानी की डैप्थ के अनुसार, लेकिन जो मौजूदा कानून है, उसके अनुसार आप तीन साल के पहले इसको रिवाइज़ नहीं कर सकते थे और उसके अन्दर बी २० परसेंट की लिमिट ले-डाउन की हुई थी, इसलिए यह बहुत आवश्यक हो गया था कि नई नीति आने के बाद कानून के अन्दर संशोधन किया जाये, कानून के अन्दर एमेंडमेंट की जाये ताकि नई नीति के अनुसार नये रेट तय किये जा सकें, इसलिए सरकार ने इसको एमेंडमेंट करने की कोशिश की है।

दूसरी बात यह है कि जो एक पहले से चली आ रही थी, एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइसिंग मकैनिज्म सरकार ने इसे भी समाप्त करने का निर्णय किया और यह समाप्ति एक अप्रैल, १९९८ से शुरू होगी। कई फेज़ेज के अन्दर यह समाप्ति होगी और इसके कारण इस बिजनेस क्रूड ऑयल की कीमत जो पहले तीन वर्ष में केवल एक बार तय होती थी, अब इंटरनेशनल प्राइस के साथ जुड़ जायेगी। अभी राव साहब बोल रहे थे कि आपको बार-बार रिवाइज़ करनी पड़ेगी। नई नीति के अनुसार यह रायल्टी डिफर करेगी और हर महीने इसकी प्राइस डिफर करेगी, रायल्टी का रेट भी डिफरेंट होगी और अगर हर महीने प्राइस डिफर करेगी तो उसकी क्वाण्टिटी भी डिफरेंट हो जायेगी और इसलिए यह आवश्यक था कि तीन साल के पीरियड का इंतजार किये बिना कानून के अन्दर यह प्रावधान किया जाये कि अगर यह इंटरनेशनल प्राइसेज़ के साथ जुड़ जाती हैं तो रायल्टी ऑटोमैटिकली वैरी करे, उसका रेट ऑटोमैटिकली वैरी करे, तीन साल तक आपको इन्तजार न करना पड़े।

तीसरी बात, क्योंकि तीन वर्ष का पीरियड था, राज्यों को रायल्टी देनी होती थी, लेकिन एग्जिस्टिंग कानून के कारण बहुत सारी प्रैक्टिकल प्राब्लम्स आती थीं। मैं सदन के ध्यान में लाना चाहता हूं कि जो स्टेटस को रायल्टी पे की जानी थी, उसमें अभी तक १९९३ से १९९६ के तीन साल का खंड और १९९६ से लेकर आज तक का जो तीन साल अगले साल पूरे होने वाले हैं, अभी तक भी विभिन्न राज्यों को कितनी रायल्टी तय की जायेगी, उसका एमाउंट आज तक सैटल नहीं हो पाया है।

श्री सत्यपाल जैन : केन्द्र सरकार ने अगर रायल्टी पे की है तो एडहॉक बेसिज पर कर दी है। कई झगड़े लम्बे अर्से तक सैटल नहीं हो पाते थे और पैंडिंग रहते थे। उसका केन्द्र सरकार को भी नुकसान होता था और राज्य सरकार को भी समय पर रायल्टी नहीं मिलती थी। इस कारण भी आवश्यक था कि एक ऐसा मेकेनिज्म निकाला जाए, एक ऐसी व्यवस्था निकाली जाए जिस कारण से चीजें आटोमेटिक हो जाएं और हमें दिक्कत न आए।

निजीकरण का समय आ रहा है। अगर आपने निजीकरण करना है तो यह तीन साल का पीरियड और २० प्रतिशत वाले मामले को वेरी करना पड़ेगा। कोई प्राइवेट कंसर्न इस मामले में आना पसंद नहीं करेगी जब तक ऐसी कंडीशन नहीं होंगी जो उनके लिए बाइंडिंग न हों। इसलिए भी बहुत आवश्यक था। आज हर क्षेत्र में निजीकरण का दौर आया है। चाहे उस पार्टी के लोग हों या इस तरफ के लोग हों। यह एक ऐसा क्षेत्र है जिसको हर पार्टी समर्थन कर रही है। इसके बिना सारी चीजें निकालना सम्भव नहीं है। हमारा अनुभव भी यह बताता है कि जो मैनेजमेंट हमने प्राइवेट सेक्टर में दिया है उसका अच्छा मैनेजमेंट हुआ है, अच्छे काम हुए उन लोगों ने किए हैं। अगर निजीकरण को प्रोत्साहन देना है तो तीन साल की कंडीशन हटानी पड़ेगी। इसी कारण तीन संशोधन मंत्री जी इसमें लाए हैं।

मेरे साथी राव साहब ने अपने भाषण में कहा कि जो एक्जीक्यूटिव को पावर दे रहे हैं वह मिसयूज हो सकती है। यह बात किसी भी कानून के बारे में कही जा सकती है। आज संसद कानून बनाती है, किसी भी अधिकारी को या अथोरिटी को ताकत देती है तो इस विश्वास से देती है कि वह अथोरिटी उसका ठीक से यूज करेगी। भले ही आर्टिकल ३५६ हो, भले ही मीसा की पावर हो, भले ही टाडा की पावर हो या किसी को अरेस्ट करने की पावर हो। किसी को जो भी पावर दी गई है हम यह परज्यूम करके चलते हैं कि अथोरिटी ईमानदारी से, सेंसिबली उसको एक्सरसाइज करेगी। इसलिए केवल अनुमान से कि मिसयूज हो सकता है उसको कानून बनाने से नहीं रोक सकते। दूसरी बात आपने कही है कि चैक बाई पार्लियामेंट..

MR. CHAIRMAN :Shri Satyapal jain, please conclude.

श्री सत्य पाल जैन :आज संसद में जिस तरीके से और जिस स्तर के लोग आ रहे हैं, जो संसद का काम्प्लेक्शन आ रहा है, आज तो संसद में वह विषय भी उठाए जाते हैं जिनका संसद से कोई ताल्लुक भी नहीं होता। अगर कोई अथोरिटी मिसयूज करेगी, एब्यूज करेगी तो जिस तरह का हाउस का काम्प्लेक्शन है, मैं ऐसा महसूस नहीं करता कि इस एक्ट के अंदर कोई अथोरिटी एक्सप्लायट करेगी, आरबिट्रेरी करेगी और उसका इश्यू नहीं उठेगा।

श्री राजो सिंह (बेगूसराय): आप सांसद भी हैं और विधिवेत्ता भी हैं। आपको संसद पर आक्षेप नहीं करना चाहिए।

श्री सत्य पाल जैन :मैं तो तारीफ कर रहा हूं।

श्री राजो सिंहः आप तारीफ नहीं कर रहे हैं, शिकायत कर रहे हैं कि एक दिन ऐसा भी आ सकता है जब नासमझ लोग संसद में आ जाएंगे।

श्री सत्य पाल जैन : मैंने ऐसा नहीं कहा। मैंने कहा कि संसद में जिस स्तर के लोग आ रहे हैं, आज संसद में कोई ऐसा मुद्दा नहीं जिसको हम न उठा सकें, चाहे वह कानून के अंदर आता हो या न आता हो। मैं ट्रिब्यूट पेश कर रहा हूं। मैं तारीफ कर रहा हूं। आज हम वह विषय भी उठा देते हैं जो संसद के दायरे में नहीं आते, जोकि राज्य के विषय होते हैं। आज सुबह ऐसा ही विषय यहां उठाया गया था। इसलिए यह बात आप अपने मन से निकाल दें। इसलिए एब्यूज की पावर या आरबिट्रेरी करने की बात आप कर रहे हैं, इसमें कोई वजन नहीं है। इस एक्ट में जो धारा ३ में संशोधन हो रहे हैं, जिसके तीन प्रभाव होंगे, वह बताना चाहता हूं। पहला है

"(i) confer upon the Central Government the powers to notify more than one rate of royalty in respect of the same mineral oil produced from different classes of leased areas;
(ii) empower the Central Governement to grant partial or full exemption from the payment of royalty in respect of offshore areas; and
(iii) make consequential amendments in section 10 of the Act for laying the notifications before Parliament.

मैं इस बिल का पूरा समर्थन करता हूं और मुझे पूरा विश्वास है कि जिस एकनीक्यूटिव को हम पावर दे रहे हैं वह ईमानदारी से, सेंसिबली इसको एक्सरसाइज करेगी।

SHRI LAXMAN CHANDRA SETH (TAMLUK): The hon. Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas has sought permission for inclusion of the enabling clause in this Act so that the Government may fix the royalty as per their choice. Apparently, we do not have much objection to it. Several hon. Members have expressed their concern about the misuse of power. The legislature will devolve the power to the authority to the Executive for fixing royalty. The Executive decides the amount of royalty payable to the States. At present in the Western coast there is huge deposit of oil and gas. These States will be benefited by the fixation of the royalty. Other parts of the country, particularly the Northern and Eastern parts of the country where the exploration has not been undertaken intensively will lose.
So, there is every chance of this amendment or this authority being misused. No doubt, the Executive will enjoy his right. My suggestion to both the Hon. Minister of State and the Hon. Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas is, for determining the royalty, a Committee consisting of the representatives of various State Governments may be formed at the Centre so that they can give their opinion on this particular issue.
In the year 1997, in the month of March, the new Oil Exploration Licencing Policy was announced. This policy provides level-playing field for national companies at par with the private companies. Uneven competition was encouraged by introduction of that new licencing policy. A number of private companies have been allowed to enter into this important field. There is always an apprehension that the national oil companies will lose their monopoly and will be lagging behind due to the competition from the private companies. This apprehension should certainly be taken into consideration.
In this context, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister towards the oil exploration operation in the North-Eastern part of the country. Everybody knows that in Tripura there is huge deposit of gas but the Government has not taken any step to bring this gas to our country through the corridor of Bangladesh. I think the Government has failed to convince Bangladesh to allow as the corridor for bringing gas from Tripura by which not only the country would be benefitted but small States would also grow economically. This should be properly looked into. The purpose will not be served just by introducing an amendment. The Government should look into the matter seriously.
A few days back, we came to know that Petronet LNG Limited has been formed to import LNG from foreign countries. This Petronet LNG Limited has decided to set up two terminals; one in Gujarat and the other in Cochin. Eastern States have been neglected. We have also come to know that for setting these two terminals, the

Government will be giving some subsidy also. The Eastern States have not been considered in this respect. In the Consultative Committee we brought on record our opposition to this. The Eastern States should not be neglected and the Government should lay emphasis on setting such LNG terminals at Haldia of Eastern Region. so that gas can be brought either from Bangladesh or from Tripura or from other countries.
While expressing his views on this particular amendment, the hon. Minister has categorically stated that this enabling clause has been inserted so as to promote exploration work. I do not know how much progress has been made in this regard, particularly in the northeastern region. We know Bengal basin has huge deposits. Some time ago the exploration work was started in Bay of Bengal but afterwards nothing has been done in this respect. A number of experts are of the opinion that in this Bengal Basin there are huge deposits of oil and gas but exploration work has not been undertaken intensively. This is why I request the hon. Minister to see to it so that his object to promote exploration can be successfully achieved. Without gas and oil, nation cannot survive. This is a very important issue. So, I once again request the Hon. Minister to look into the matter and see that the executive power is not misused and a Committee consisting of the representatives of various States is formed to look into it. With these words I conclude. Thank you.

SHRI T.R. BAALU (MADRAS SOUTH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all, I would like to place on record in this august House that this aspect of bringing an amendment is the baby of the United Front Government in which yourself, Shri P. Chidambaram, myself and other colleagues had participated to play a key role in this regard. Sir, before I enter into this subject I want to give some arithmetic so that the august House could know what is the present position. During 1998-99, the estimated demand of the product is 89 million metric tonne (MMT). The estimated crude oil requirement is 90 MMT and the estimated shortfall of crude oil is 57 MMT. The estimated natural gas demand is 72 million cubic metre per day and the production of natural gas per day is 63 million cubic metre. As far as natural gas is concerned, there is a shortfall of nine million cubic metre per day. There is a shortfall of 57 MMT of crude oil. At the same time, by the year 2001-02, the estimated demand of the product would be 113 MMT, the estimated crude oil requirement would be 115 MMT. The estimated indigenous production of crude oil would be 39 MMT. So, the total shortfall of the crude oil in the year 2001-02 would be 76 MMT. As far as the estimated demand for natural gas is concerned, during 2001-02, it would be around 147 million standard cubic metres per day and the production would be around 63 million standard cubic metres per day. There would be a shortfall of 84 million cubic metre per day.
As regards the cost of import, as on date, the import bill at the present value of dollar would be about nine billion US dollars because we have to import 37 MMT of crude oil and at the same time we have to import the product of around 23 MMT. So, the cost would be about nine billion US dollars. In terms of Indian currency, it would cost approximately Rs.40,000 crore.
After having examined all this, the United Front Government had made a prudent decision during 1997 to go for new exploration. The total sedimentary area within India is 3.14 million square kilometres. Out of which so far we have explored only 32.7 per cent. So there is an unexplored area of 67.3 per cent. So, during the past 50 years, in fact, up to 1997 nobody took pains to go for new exploration and invention. It was only the United Front Government which were at the helm of affairs in the year 1997 took pains and they decided to go in for new exploration. They wanted to upgrade the policies. That is why the new exploration licensing policy was announced by Shri P. Chidambaram, the former Finance Minister during his Budget Speech.
After that it was drafted and announced by me in this House in March 1997. There has not been any finding of new oil for the past 25 years after the Bombay High. As has been said just now, we announced the New Exploration Licencing Policy (NELP) to make the level playing field because the exploration required huge risk factor, high technology and long lead time to get the returns on investment. This was the thrust area which was announced by the United Front Government. The thrust areas are frontier areas hitherto unexplored and deep waters beyond 400 metre depth. In pursuance of this, the United Front Government wanted to announce about the private concessional rate of royalty. That is the crux of the issue. The hon. Minister for Petroleum has brought before this House the amendment to pay 12.5 per cent of royalty at the Well Lead Price as far as on land production is concerned. At the same time, if a particular company goes to explore and produce in the off shore area, they can pay only ten per cent. That is the crux of the issue.
We had identified 37 blocks. The United Front Government had identified 37 blocks - 28 in off shore and nine in on shore. I do not know what follow up action taken on those blocks which we had identified during that time. I do not know what is happening in the Petroleum Ministry. At the same time, the ONGC, the national oil company was inducted to take up deep water drilling in selected off shore areas located in the Cauvery Besin,

Krishna Godavari Besin and Konkan- Goa Besin. At that time, everything was transparent. In fact, each and every day I was attending to the work and I was in the know of things as to what was happening in each and every national oil company. I do not know what is happening now. At that time, in Konkan Goa Besin, the ONGC was inducted and the ONGC has identified new area of oil source. Even the Sagar vessel which was a deep drilling vessel, has been converted. The hon. Minister some two or three weeks ago announced about it as if he had done it. I do not know why he is saying that. The United Front Government had announced it. Probably, he may not be a part of that particular issue. I know after the discussion with the then Prime Minister Shri Deve Gowda, the former Finance Minister Shri Chidambaram instructed me to take up the matter to meet the challenge. I took lot of pains in that regard. The seismic survey of the entire Bay of Bengal was completed. The survey was conducted in the area of about 12,500 line kilometres. I have not disclosed anything up till now. In the Andaman off shore area, the data which we had collected, has been sent to Western Australia.

As I said earlier, we had collected precious data off the Andamans. The data collected had revealed that gas hydrate was available off the Andamans. I want to say that many of my friends may not be knowing the technical words. What is a gas hydrate? Three hundred units of natural gas is equal to one unit of gas hydrate. Natural gas will transform into liquid. After the liquid stage, it will transform into solid, that solid state of gas is called gas Hydrates, this gas hydrate are available plenty in Andaman off shore.

We are having natural gas in the deep water area off the Andamans. It will cater to the total needs of India for another thirty years. This could not be announced by us at that time because we were going on collecting the data, confirming and reconfirming it and like that. At that time, some of our friends were a part of the coalition Government. Many multinational companies had come. In fact, they purchased our data. The data had been collected and sent to Houston, the world market. The data had been purchased by paying a higher price by two times than what they paid for the Bombay High gas. They collected the data. They purchased the data for the East Coast area which is your area, Mr. Chairman. You know how many multinationals have got interest in purchasing the data by paying a higher rate, by two times, than what they paid for the Bombay High gas. It is high time that the hon. Minister for Petroleum should sit tight and extract work from the oil company people. The United Front Government appointed one Director General of Hydrocarbons. I think even now he has not been given full freedom to look into the affairs. I do not know whether his salary has been fixed or not. The Director General of Hydrocarbons is there. But it seems that he has not been properly treated. He has not been vested with proper powers to go into the details and to see why the ONGC has not been taking care enough to go for new drilling . So, proper power should be given to the Director General of Hydrocarbons.

By the by, in Konkan-Goa sector, we had collected very good data. Like that, we had collected the data in respect of the East Coast and the area off the Andamans. So, I request that all these things will have to be looked into by the hon. Minister.

When I became the Minister, I paid a visit to my local constituency which is my birth place. I hail from the Cauvery Basin. In the Cauvery Basin, the Narimanam fractionator is there. A fractionator is a plant through which LPG can be extracted from the natural gas. The gas will come to the fractionator and from the fractionator we can get the LPG. But the point is that the fractionator, which was constructed at a cost of Rs.48 crore, was abandoned during 1997. It was kept idle. I had instructed and told the authorities concerned that it should function within 15 days. Within ten days, I got the result. I got a telephone call from the refinery people saying that it started functioning. Now, it has been abandoned. It is not working properly. Why is it not working properly? The LPG production unit was constructed at a cost of Rs.48 crore. It is kept idle. I do not know why it is not functioning.

The United Front Government announced one scheme called the "on-demand supply of LPG" by 1999... (Interruptions) The wait-listed LPG customers were of the order of about 120 lakh. The United Front Government announced that the 120 lakh backlog should be wiped out by 1999. That was the instruction given by the then United Front Government. The aim was that by another one year period, the 120 lakh wait-listed people should get the LPG.

I do not know what action has been taken by the hon. Minister.

We have received tatkal scheme. Previously it was there in the Congress regime. We have reduced the charges to Rs.4000. It has been reintroduced now. I want to know the present position of Tatkal Scheme. I would request the hon. Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas to kindly go through the data collected by the United Front Government to see what best he could do. He would not have concentrated because of infighting n the alliance. Probably he would have been one of the representatives to see that nothing goes wrong. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: You have faced the same thing in the United Front Government.

least hereafter we will not disturb you. The Opposition has taken a decision not to disturb you. You can see from the situation that is prevailing in the House for the last three days. Neither the Congress nor any of us is interested to disturb you. We do not have the numbers. We will not topple you. Nobody in the Opposition is going to topple you. You are a better performer that is why you have lost in three or four States! Till the completion of five years, we want you to enjoy power and to commit more mistakes so that after five years, at least 90 per cent of the results will be in our favour. That is why, I request the hon. Minister to continue and commit more mistakes.

श्री मोहन सिंह (देवरिया): सभापति महोदय, मैं इस विधेयक पर अपनी राय प्रकट करने से पहले बालू साहब को धन्यवाद देना चाहता हूं कि उन्होंने बहुत ही अच्छे ढंग से, मंत्री जी को इस सदन को कनविन्स करने के लिए जो बात नहीं कहनी चाहिए थी, उन्होंने उसको लेकर बहुत सारे तर्क दिए। अभी तक इस सरकार ने अ पनी तरफ से कोई अच्छा काम नहीं किया सिवाय इसके कि संयुक्त मोर्चा सरकार के जो अच्छे काम थे, उनको समय-समय पर विधेयक के तौर पर, मुंशी के तौर पर इस सदन में पेश किया। इसके लिए हम माननीय मंत्री जी को धन्यवाद देना चाहते हैं।

सभापति महोदय, इस देश को पैट्रोलियम प्रोडक्टस की बहुत ज्यादा जरूरत है। जितनी आवश्यकता और अपेक्षा अभी मंत्री जी और पुराने मंत्री जी ने बतलाई है, उससे भी अधिक आवश्यकता इस देश को है। हमारी दुश्वारी यह है कि हम अपने संसाधनों पर निर्भर रहने के लिए तैयार नहीं हैं। हम को बाहर से सारे पैट्रोलियम प्रोडक्टस मंगाने पड़ते हैं जिस के चलते बजट घाटा निरन्तर बढ़ता चला जाता है। पिछले २०-२२ साल से पैट्रोलियम प्रोडक्टस के प्रशासकीय मूल्य निर्धारित करने का एक दस्तूर बन गया था। हमने उसको बजट से बाहर किया था। इसकी वजह से तेल पूल का घाटा निरन्तर बढ़ता चला जा रहा है। ऐसा अनुमान है कि वह घाटा इतना बढ़ता जाएगा जितना पूरे देश के डिफेंस का बजट है। इस घाटे को पूरा करने के लिए सिवाय इसके कि हम इस क्षेत्र में आत्मनिर्भर हों, हमारे पास कोई चारा नहीं है। आत्मनिर्भरता के लिए स्थानीय इलाकों का दोहन करने की सम्भावनाओं का प्रयास करना चाहिए। इसी बात को मद्देनजर रखते हुए यह बात तय की गई कि इसके जो अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय दाम होंगे, उसके साथ-साथ हमारे देश के पैट्रोलियम प्रोडक्टस के दाम निर्धारित होते रहेंगे, उसके साथ इसके दाम घटते-बढ़ते रहेंगे।

अभी मंत्री जी ने बयान दिया कि चूंकि अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मूल्य डीजल के कम हो गए हैं, भारत सरकार भी उनके मूल्यों में कमी करने का विचार कर रही है। कुछ दिन पहले सात-आठ पैसे कम किए गए।

श्री मोहन सिंह : जब हम ऐसा करना चाहते हैं तो हमको संसाधनों की आवश्यकता है। अपने देश के भूगर्भ में उपलब्ध जो पेट्रोलियम प्रोडेक्टस हैं, उसकी संभा वनाओं की तलाश की हमको सबसे अधिक आवश्यकता है। रोजाना हम इस सदन में इस बात की मांग करते रहते हैं कि हमारे इलाके में, हमारे क्षेत्र में इसका एक्सप्लोरेशन हो। पिछले १०-१२ वर्षों से एक तरह से हमारे देश में एक्सप्लोरेशन का काम पैसे के अभाव में ठप्प है क्योंकि हम सारी पूंजी, सारा पैसा बाहर से इस पदार्थ को मंगाने में खर्च करते रहे हैं। अपने संसाधनों को बढ़ाने के लिए हमारे पास साधन नहीं हैं। इसलिए यह बात बिल्कुल वाजिब है कि हम एक्सप्लोरेशन के काम को बढ़ायें और उस काम को बढ़ाने के लिए जो अलग-अलग तरीके हैं जैसे डीप सी में जाकर जब हम एक्सप्लोर करेंगे तो वहां हमारा खर्च भी अधिक होगा और उसका रिस्क भी अधिक रहता है। जब उसका रिस्क और उसका खर्च भी अधिक है तो वही पैसा रॉयल्टी के रूप में, खर्च के रूप में दिया जाये जो हम मैदानी क्षेत्र को देते हैं, तो एक्सप्लोरेशन करने के लिए कोई भी तैयार नहीं होगा। इस दृष्टि से इस कानून में परिवर्तन की पूरी संभावना थी और परिवर्तन करने के लिए आप विधेयक लाये। हमने सांविधिक संकल्प केवल इस भावना से दिया था कि सदन में बहस हो सके। मेरी कोई भावना और मंशा इस विधेयक का विरोध करने की नहीं थी। मैं इसका स्वागत करता हूं और आपको धन्यवाद देता हूं कि आप इस तरह का विधेयक लायें। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN (TRICHUR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all, let me go on record that an amendment like this should not have been implemented with an Ordinance. I think, Clause 5 which empowers the Government to completely exempt royalty cannot be accepted. I am afraid the present Government is not safeguarding the interest of the States. Our federal set-up is being threatened, in my opinion. In that context, if we give powers to the Government to completely exempt royalty, I am afraid, the States may lose their vital interests. So, I am opposed to this amendment of completely exempting royalty to the deserving sectors.
Sir, this amendment has to be viewed in the background of the Policy Statement of the Government on the Development of exploration of Oil and Natural Gas. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation is one of our most thriving public sector units, which we call as `Navaratnas'. Both ONGC and IOC, are immensely helping our economy

and our country. The present Government has declared that both ONGC and IOC are going to be privatised,so they are listed for disinvestment.

VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have never announced that. It is a wrong information.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : I am speaking on the basis of Press reports.

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to clarify at this juncture that this Government has no intention to privatise any of our public sector oil companies including ONGC and IOC.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : There are authentic reports to the contrary.

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: I am saying this on behalf of the Government. Where is the authentic report then?

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : If that is the position of the Government, I am glad. But still two of these `Navaratnas' are listed in the disinvestment list.

16.00 hrs.

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: Shri Baalu has claimed all this.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : All right.

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: Regarding disinvestment, you are a part of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Raghavan, please conclude.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN :: Disinvestment is not only to the Indian capital but it is also disinvestment even to the foreign capital. The oil and natural gas are an immense wealth of our country. I am grateful to Shri T.R. Baalu who has given some statistics of our immense wealth. We have competent technicians. We have competent infrastructure. These two companies came under our Navratnas. Why should we invite private capital and foreign capital for exploring this immense wealth? When these companies function, you reduce royalty. You are asking for powers to reduce royalty to the States. You are asking for powers to exempt royalty completely. This amendment is not so simple as the hon. Minister makes us to believe. This immense wealth is going to be explored and I exploited by private companies including foreign companies . I must say in this connection that accepting foreign capital for such vital sectors is very dangerous. I would remind the hon. friend on the Treasury Benches that not only we the left parties but in your own ranks also there are elements who oppose foreign companies. The then `Jan Jagran Manch' is campaigning against letting these foreign companies come in in such vital sectors. Even the RSS meeting at Bangalore passed a resolution some months foreign capital will be allowed and no multinational corporation will be allowed to exploit our wealth . After coming to power, you are running very fast - faster than Dr. Manmohan Singh. After the MNC's and dangerous sector. So, I am against giving powers. ... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN :Thank you. So, this amendment is not so harmless as the Minister has make us believe.

डा. शकील अहमद (मधुबनी) : सभापति महोदय, मैं आपका आभारी हूं कि आपने मुझे बोलने का अवसर दिया।

ऑयलफील्ड रैगुलेशन एंड डवलपमेंट एमेंडमेंट बिल, १९९८ पर बोलने के लिए मैं खड़ा हुआ हूं। नीतिगत तौर पर यह बात सही है कि ऑयल खदानों में जहां पर खुदाई करते हैं, जहां वाटर का लेविल अलग है, जिसका डैस्टीनेशन दूर है, उसका रैगुलेशन का रेट निश्चित रूप से अलग-अलग होना चाहिए, मगर हमने जो

अधिकार अपने एग्जीक्यूटिव्ज़ को दिये हैं, यह मेरी समझ से कुछ ज्यादा हैं। आपको याद होगा ऑयल एंड नेचुरल गैस कमीशन में एग्जीक्यूटिव्ज़ को ज्यादा पावर्स देने का जो नतीजा होता है, वह ओ.एन.जी.सी. में पिछले दो-तीन वर्षों में जो घपले हुए हैं, जो विजिलेंस के केसेज़ हुए हैं,

श्री शकील अहमद : जो गड़बड़ियां हुई हैं, वे किसी से छिपी हुई नहीं हैं। इसलिए मैं मंत्री जी से आग्रह करूंगा और सरकार से कहूंगा कि पदाधिकारियों को इतनी छूट न दें कि घोड़ा बेलगाम हो जाए और फिर जो गलतियां पहले की गई हैं, वही दोहराई जाएं। इंडियन ऑयल कार्पोरेशन और ओ.एन.जी.सी. के पदाधिकारियों पर निश्चितरूप से नियंत्रण रहना चाहिए। उन्हें ऐसे अधिकार न दें जिसका वे दुरुपयोग कर सकें। कोई भी कानून जो हम बनाते हैं तो अधिकारियों को विश्वास पर ही सौंपते हैं, मेरे मित्र जैन साहब ने ठीक कहा। लेकिन उस संस्था की ओर से या लोगों की ओर से एक बार विश्वासघात होता है

तो उस पर हमें ध्यान देना चाहिए। उनको जिम्मेदारी देने से पहले अच्छी तरह से सोच-समझ लेना चाहिए। यह कहा गया है कि इंडिजिनस क्रूड ऑयल का दाम हर महीने फलक्चुएट करेगा। मैं समझता हूं इससे इकोनमी में अनिश्चितता आएगी। अगर महीने की पहली तारीख को एक दाम है और बाद में दूसरा दाम हो जाता है तो पूरी इकोनमी अनिश्चित हो जाएगी। इससे क्रूड ऑयल के जो व्यापारी हैं, जो इसका बिजनेस करते हैं उनका आंकलन गड़बड़ा जाएगा और पूरी इकोनॉमिक व्य वस्था गड़बड़ा जाएगी। इसलिए मंथली रेगुलेशन गलत है, इसको दूर करना चाहिए और थोड़ा समय देना चाहिए तथा इसके लिए एक निश्चित अवधि तय करनी चाहिए। इसलिए ज्यादा फलक्चुएशन होगा तो ज्यादा अनिश्चितता बढ़ेगी और मार्केट स्थिर नहीं रह पाएगी।

तीसरे संशोधन में कहा गया है:

"(iii) make consequential amendments in section 10 of the Act for laying the notifications before Parliament."

यह संसद से बचने की कोशिश नहीं होनी चाहिए। संसद सर्वोपरि है। संसद में निश्चितरूप से जो नोटिफिकेशन है, वह आना चाहिए और संसद के एप्रूवल के बाद काम होना चाहिए। यह ठीक है कि हम संसाधन बचाने के लिए ऑयल का खनन करें। हमें अधिक से अधिक विदेशी मुद्रा को बचाने के लिए अपने घर में खनन करना चाहिए और तेल के स्रोतों को एक्सप्लोर करना चाहिए। लेकिन होता क्या है कोई जब मंत्री आता है तो ओ.एन.जी.सी. और इंडियन ऑयल वालों से बात होती है और वे पूछते हैं कि फलां प्रोजेक्ट का क्या हाल है तो वे कहते हैं कि वह तो कोई प्रोजेक्ट ही नहीं था, वह तो पोलिटिकल प्रोजेक्ट था। इस तरह जो प्रभा वी लोग होते हैं वे अपने एरिया में एक्सप्लोरेशन का काम शुरू करवा देते हैं। यह पिछले आठ-दस सालों से चल रहा है। जब तक यह इंडिकेशन नहीं मिले कि किसी खास क्षेत्र में तेल का भंडार है, उसका क्राइटेरिया जब तक पूरा न हो, तब तक कोई प्रोजेक्ट नहीं खोला जाए। मैं ऐसे कई प्रोजेक्टस के बारे में जानता हूं जिनके बारे में आपके विभाग के लोग कहते हैं कि यह वायबल नहीं था, यह राजनैतिक फायदे के लिए मंत्री जी के दबाव से शुरू किया था। इसलिए ऐसा नहीं होना चाहिए।

बिहार में मधुबनी जिले में जयनगर सबडिवीजन में दुल्लीपट्टी में आठ-दस साल पहले तेल खनन का कार्य किया गया था। उसकी जांच करने के बाद, हम सब लोगों को मालूम है और उसकी रिपोर्ट आई थी कि वहां तेल का भंडार है, लेकिन वहां काम बंद कर दिया गया। मैं चाहूंगा मंत्री महोदय इसकी छानबीन करके जो सम्भव हो सकता है इस दिशा में कार्यवाही करने की कृपा करें।

SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO (KALAHANDI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the discussion on this piece of legislation which is taking place today is a welcome measure relates to the New Exploration Licensing Policy, that is, NELP. It has been seen that the demand of oil has been growing but our country has not been able to produce oil to meet the demand and supply of oil.

Therefore, this piece of legislation was necessitated which had lead to further exploration of oil besides encouraging private sector participation in the exploration of oil. You will see that in the production of oil, there has been a shortfall. The production of crude oil in 1997-98 was 30.9 million tonnes which was less by nearly 10 million tonnes compared to 1996-97. Therefore, this legislation will definitely encourage the vast deposits to be explored and also to improve the oil production in the country. You are sitting on an oil resource covering 1.4 billion square kilometres of sedimentation which is full of oil, but you are unable to explore it.

I would like to mention here that the performance of the ONGC was not satisfactory. The ONGC, the only company which was exploiting these natural resources, has not been able to meet its optimum level. Therefore, this has necessitated in this legislation. By means of this legislation only, we could save a lot of foreign exchange for this country which is being drained out, and which could have been utilised for other important developmental and social projects.

You can see that with this regulation, they have brought a lot of changes. For example, in The Economic Survey, 1997-98 it is mentioned in the heding Major Policy Reforms in the Oil and Gas sectors. I quote some points from the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP):

"No mandatory state participation through ONGC/OIL.

ONGCL and Oil to compete for obtaining petroleum licenses.

Open availability of exploration acreages to provide a continuous window of opportunities to oil companies.

Freedom to contractors for marketing of crude oil and gas in domestic market.

Royalty payment at the rate of 12.5 per cent which is clearly evident in this Bill."

Therefore, in right earnest, this Government has shown us the way and has taken the first step towards solving this chronic problem of oil and natural gas which is becoming a scarce commodity though we have plenty in the country. Today, we have been importing gas from Oman and Iran for our consumers, which could have been averted. If in all seriousness the previous Government had implemented this Bill, we would have become self-sufficient. But the previous Government never tried it.
Therefore, I thank the hon. Minister and this Government for bringing this legislation and it should be implemented in right earnest.
SHRI P.C. THOMAS (MUVATTUPUZHA): The exploration and exploitation of oil is one of the most important works which the Government has to undertake and in the developing countries like ours it is one of the major thrusts which we have to give. I am sure the Government will take this very seriously and take all measures to see that the 67 per cent of the grey areas which are identified but not tapped so far, will be taken soon to task. I am also sure that amendments of this nature may be necessary to give more powers to the Government and to see that not only more companies are attracted but also to see that more drilling takes place. I am sure that there has to be some broad norms and as per the NELP which has been announced, the rates of some mineral oil will have to change from place to place and for that matter the present law is not adequate enough to give powers to the Government. Therefore, I do not stand in the way of this amendment which may be necessary as far as new thrust is concerned.
However, I would submit that there are areas which have been identified and work has to be taken up in those areas very soon. For example, it has already been said that the coast in the West as well as in the East has to be developed. It has also been said specifically that some of the coastal areas in Kerala have also been found to be having great oil deposits. I am sure that the Government will see to it that new exploitation is taken up in these areas very soon.
I do not propose to speak more. But I would only make a suggestion. The need for LPG, LNG and also oil is so great that the distribution is also as important as the need. The areas are many as far as India is concerned. We have so many States and so the needs of the States are also in different ways and as far as some States are concerned, we do not have enough sources of energy to have the very important infrastructure like electricity and energy fuels which are necessary for the industries to develop.

As far as some of the States which are industrially backward like Kerala are concerned, which is always applauded as a very good State for so many other things, like literacy and so many other aspects, I feel that industrialisation is so poor that we have to see that something immediate is taken up in this regard.

There is an LNG project in Kochi -- I am sure that the hon. Minister knows about it -- which has to be expedited. There is a refinery project in Kochi which has to be expedited. I am mentioning because it is in my constituency. About 500 MW of power is going to be produced in Kochi by that refinery project. However, the fuel input is to be met from the Kochi Refinery itself. I think that it is a project which has to be expedited. About Rs.2480 crore is the project amount. As the hon. Minister knows, Kerala is a State where electricity is still something very difficult for us to have. We have power cuts even though there has been a good rainfall. I am not accusing anybody. But it is a fact that in Kerala industries are going down to down. So, I feel that these projects which have been taken up must be expedited.

I request the hon. Minister to take immediate steps.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): Mr. Chairman, I am not `Swami' but I am `Swain'. Some people call me `Swine'. I am not a pig. Anyway in Hindi they write all the time as `Swine'. I have been telling so many people that I was not `Swine', I am `Swain' but still nobody listens to me. From swine you have made me `Swamy'. I am not `Swami', I am `Swain'.

I rise to support this Bill and I want to support it just like many other speakers even from the Treasury Benches and from the Opposition Benches. All of them have supported it and I also support it.

I also made an exhaustive presentation. I prepared for this. The same thing has been going on repeated time and again. I am not going to repeat. I will just say two or three sentences. The point is, in our country we are falling short of crude oil. We want to be self-sufficient. Otherwise, as Shri B.K. Dev said earlier, very valuable foreign exchange is being drained out to foreign countries. So, we want to be self-sufficient and if we want to be self-

sufficient, we have to allow the private sector to enter into it. The private explorers should also be allowed to enter into it. If we want that the private explorers should enter it, then they should be given some incentives also which have been proposed in this Bill.

I thank the hon. Minister of Petroleum for having brought such a very good Bill, though through an Ordinance. But he has brought it.

But, having brought it, he is now trying to take the support of this august House. Sir, I will just mention two or three more points on this case. I would draw the attention of the hon. Minister to one thing which is this. He should see to it that by 2000 AD, unleaded petrol should be made available. Unless you do that, a time will come where none of us will be able to stay in Delhi. It is because the atmosphere of Delhi has been polluted so much. Every year the pollution level is increasing so much not only in Delhi but also in all the other metropolitan cities and towns of this country. The main cause of pollution is exhausts from the petrol-driven vehicles. So, I appeal to you to see to it that by 2000 AD unleaded petrol is made available.

In Orissa, Paradip Petroleum Refinery is going to be set up with an amount of Rs.8,000 crore. Let the Prime Minister go and inaugurate it in a very short period so that the paucity of petroleum in our country will be squared up.

Last but not least, I would like to make an appeal to you just like Shri Baalu. Why is it taking seven years to get a gas connection in our country? They should get it immediately. All the private operators who have LPG dealerships opened their companies in small towns all over India. But they are closing their companies very early. Why are they closing them?

Shri Baalu is not here. Finally, I will just tell him a very small thing. He is very much worried that no credit has been given to him for the good work he has done. But I would just tell him that this Government is not Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

प्रो. जोगेन्द्र कवाडे (चिमूर) : सभापति महोदय, तेल क्षेत्र (विनियमन तथा विकास) संशोधन विधेयक, १९४८ में और संशोधन करने के लिए मंत्री जी ने जो f वधेयक पेश किया है, उसके लिए मैं मंत्री जी का स्वागत करता हूं और धन्यवाद देता हूं। सत्ता पक्ष ने भी इस संशोधन विधेयक का स्वागत किया है और हम f वपक्ष के सदस्य भी इसका स्वागत और समर्थन करते हैं।

महोदय, मैं ज्यादा समय नहीं लूंगा बल्कि चंद शब्दों में कुछ बातें इस विधेयक के सिलसिले में सदन के सामने रखना चाहता हूं। हमारा देश विकासशील है। हमारे देश की तेल और गैस की जरूरत दिन-प्रति-दिन बढ़ती जा रही है। उस बढ़ती हुई जरूरत को देखते हुए आप यह संशोधन विधेयक लाए हैं। हमारे देश के सीमांत क्षेत्र में इस प्रकार के जो भी एक्सप्लोरेशन होने चाहिए, उनको ज्यादा प्रोत्साहन मिले और उनमें ज्यादा तेजी आए, इस संशोधन के माध्यम से निश्चित रूप से उसमें सहायता मिलेगी, ऐसा मेरा मानना है।

प्रो. जोगिन्द्र कवाडे जारी मंत्री महोदय ने जो बात कही है और उन्होंने जो प्रोविजन किया है वह भी काफी अच्छा है और उससे देश में गैस और तेल के क्षेत्र में काफी सहायता मिलेगी। हमारे देश में ज्योलोजिकल सर्वे ऑफ इंडिया और ओ.एन.जी.सी. को देश की प्राकृतिक सम्पदा तेल और गैस को एक्सप्लोर करने के लिए जो कोशिश करनी चाहिए वह कोशिश नहीं हो रही है। लेकिन इस संशोधन के माध्यम से जो उद्देश्य रखा गया है उसको कामयाब बनाना चाहिए, उसका दुरूपयोग नहीं होना चाहिए, ताकि हमारे देश के लोगों की जो तेल और गैस की जरुरत है वह हम पूरी कर सकें।

आज कुकिंग गैस की जरुरत दिन प्रति दिन बढ़ रही है। अभी हमारे कुछ मित्रों ने कहा कि हमारे देश में ६७ ऐसे एरियाज हैं जिनको समुद्र और दूसरी जगह चिन्हित किया गया है जहां तेल और गैस के लिए कोशिश होनी चाहिए। वहां पूरी तरह से कोशिश नहीं हो रही है, इसीलिए हम तेल और गैस की जरुरत को पूरा नहीं कर पा रहे हैं। इस संशोधन बिल का समर्थन करते हुए मैं मंत्री महोदय से और सरकार से अनुरोध करूंगा कि हमारे देश के जो प्रैस्टेजियस ऑरगेनाइजेशन ओ.एन.जी.सी. और ज्योलोजिकल सर्वे ऑफ इंडिया हैं, उनका सहायता से तेल और गैस के क्षेत्र में हम कैसे स्वावलम्बी बन सके - यह हमारी कोशिश होनी चाहिए। अगर ऐसा इस बिल के माध्यम से होगा तो हम मंत्री महोदय और सरकार का धन्यवाद करेंगे। मैं एक बार फिर इस बिल का समर्थन करते हुए मंत्री महोदय का धन्यवाद करता हूं। (इति)

श्री राजो सिंह (बेगूसराय): सम्मानीय सभापति जी, इस बिल में बहुत साधारण संशोधन लेकर ये आए हैं। सन १९४८ में यह बिल पास हुआ था। इसमें धारा ६(क) में दो अमैंडमेंट चार और पांच जोड़े गये हैं। एक में इन्होंने कहा है कि दूरी के हिसाब से हम उसका रेट तय करेंगे। दूसरा इन्होंने कहा है कि हम अपनी अधिसूचना के द्वारा यह तय करेंगे कि रेट इनके कहां लगे। हमारे कई माननीय सदस्यों ने अपनी-अपनी समस्याओं की ओर भी सदन का ध्यान आकृष्ट किया है। मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि यह बिल काबिले-तारीफ है और मैं इसका समर्थन करता हूं। सभापति महोदय, आप भी सांसद हैं और पैनल में है। अभी हमारे बालू साहब ने कहा कि गैस कनैक्शन के लिए इनके पास भी जो आवेदन आते हैं उनमें भी विलम्ब होता है। मैं नहीं जानता कि भारत सरकार एक है या दो हैं, शायद यह बात

मंत्री जी जानते होंगे कि भारत सरकार एक ही है। फिर एक सदन के माननीय सदस्यों को गैस कनेक्शन का अधिकार मिला हुआ है और लोक सभा के माननीय सदस्यों को गैस कनैक्शन का अधिकार नहीं मिला हुआ है। जब मंत्री महोदय से बात की जाती है तो वे कहते हैं कि इस बारे में कोर्ट में मामला लम्बित है।

श्री राजो सिंह : आखिर कोर्ट में मामला लम्बित है। इसकी कौन लड़ाई लड़ेगा? यह पूरे मंत्रिमंडल की जवाबदेही है। आप मंत्रिमंडल में है। आपकी भी जवाबदेही है। दूसरे सदन के सदस्यों को क्यों यह सुविधा प्राप्त है लेकिन कोर्ट के आदेश के कारण लोग सभा के सदस्यों को यह सुविधा प्राप्त नहीं है। इसमें प्रयास करना चाहिए। प्रधान मंत्री और कानून मंत्री इसमें इंटरफियर करें। मंत्री जी का एडवोकेट तमिलनाडु में होगा। आप उन्हें डायरैक्शन क्यों नहीं देते हैं? आपके विभाग में वरिष्ठ पदाधिकारी हैं। मैं उन लोगों में से नहीं हूं कि आपके विभाग के अधिकारियों पर विश्वास न करूं। विश्वास से सब काम चलते हैं। अकबर विश्वास करता था और औरंगजेब अविश्वास करता था। यह इतिहास बताता है। हमें किसी पर तो विश्वास करना होगा। इस क्षेत्र में काम होना चाहिए।

आज गांवों में चूल्हा जलाने के लिए गैस कनैक्शन की आवश्यकता पड़ती है। गांव वाले लकड़ी नहीं जलाते हैं। हमारे पास क्षेत्र के लोग आते हैं। वे टी.वी. और रेडियो में सुनते हैं कि हमें टेलीफोन और गैस कनैक्शन मिलता है। वे हम से इनकी मांग करते हैं। जब हम उन्हें कहते हैं कि हमें ये कनैक्शन नहीं मिलते हैं तो वे हम पर विश्वास नहीं करते। शायद वोटर आपके पास नहीं जाता होगा लेकिन हमारा वोटर हम से इसकी मांग करता है। जब हम उन्हें समझाते हैं कि यह मामला कोर्ट में हैं तो वे समझते हैं कि हम किसी दूसरे को यह कनैक्शन देते हैं।

आज तेल की आवश्यकता है। इसकी खपत बढ़ती जा रही है। डीजल और पैट्रोल के दाम घटते-बढ़ते हैं। गरीब के घर इस्तेमाल होने वाले कैरोसिन तेल के लिए आपने क्या व्यवस्था की है? उसका रेट बढ़ना नहीं चाहिए। जो बस, ट्रैक्टर और कार चलाते हैं, उनमें इस्तेमाल हेने वाले पैट्रोल के दाम आप चाहें तो बढ़ाएं। वे इस भार को बर्दाश्त कर सकते हैं लेकिन झोंपड़ी में रहने वाला गरीब आदमी इस भार को बर्दाश्त नहीं कर पाता। हमारे मंत्री जी कांग्रेसी थे। वह तमिलनाडु में कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष भी थे। वह परिस्थितवश उधर चले गए। इन्दिरा गांधी जी ने कहा था कि गरीब की झोंपड़ी में रोशनी लाई जाए। आप भी गरीब की झोंपड़ी में रोशनी लाने का काम करिए। यह छोटा सा बिल है। इस पर बहुत विवाद की आवश्यकता नहीं है। मैं इसका समर्थन करता हूं।

SHRI CHETAN CHAUHAN (AMROHA): Sir, the Ministry should issue a letter saying that there is a restriction on the issuance of gas connections so that, at least, we can show it to the people.

पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री संतोष कुमार गंगवार): सभापति महोदय, आपका धन्यवाद। मेरे बाद राममूर्ति जी विस्तार से इस बिल के संदर्भ में बताएंगे। यह बात सही है कि नई सरकार बनने के बाद बहुत महत्वपूर्ण फैसले इस मंत्रालय द्वारा लिए गए। उनकी जानकारी धीरे-धीरे जनता को हो रही है। हमारे मंत्रालय ने सबसे पहले १.४.१९९८ से ए पी एम डिसमैंटल करने का फैसला लिया। एन.ई.एल.पी. इसके साथ जुड़ा है। वह सब की जानकारी में है। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मूल्यों के हिसाब से महीने में एक बार इनके मूल्य निर्धारित होते हैं। हमने एन.ई.एल.पी. लागू करने का फैसला लिया। राज्य सरकार की इस पर सहमति है।

जैसा कि पूर्व में सत्यपाल भाई बता रहे थे, यह बात सही है कि तीन साल होने के कारण राज्यों को बहुत असुविधा होती है। उन्हें निश्चित धनराशि नहीं मिलती। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय परिस्थितियों को देखते हुए ऐसा लगता है कि वास्तव में आज के समय में क्रूड ऑयल के अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मूल्य बहुत कम है। वे जब कभी बढ़ेंगे तो उन्हें उसके हिसाब से कैसे नियंत्रित करेंगे, बालू जी ने इस सम्बन्ध में विस्तार से बताया। हमारे मंत्रालय का लक्षय देश की जनता को सही दिशा देने का है। इसलिए जो मामले पिछले तीन-चार साल से लम्बित थे, हमारी सरकार ने आते ही १८ ब्लॉक हस्ताक्षर किए। पहले एक्सपोर्ट फील्ड पर समझौता होता था। हम लोगों ने उन फील्डस पर समझौता करने का निश्चय लिया है जहां तेल की तलाश करनी है। यह बात सब की जानकारी में है कि तेल की तलाश एक लाटरी जैसा सौदा है और डीप सी में उससे भी ज्यादा महंगा सौदा है। दुनिया के दूसरे देश यहां आए, तेल की तलाश करें और उसके बाद तेल मिलने के बाद शेयरिंग कांट्रैक्ट आपस में करें। सब लोग नई नीति को पसन्द भी कर रहे हैं। मैं इस संदर्भ में बहुत ज्यादा कहना नहीं चाहूंगा।

श्री सन्तोष गंगवार : कुछ भ्रांतियां जरूर लोगों के दिमाग में हैं। अभी बालू जी ने कहा कि एल.पी.जी. की वेटिंग लिस्ट

... (व्यवधान)

श्री राजो सिंह : आप तो मंत्री हैं लेकिन हम लोगों का क्या होगा? आप हम लोगों को भी एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन दिलाता।

श्री संतोष कुमार गंगवार: इसलिए मैं बोल रहा हूं। उन्होंने २७० लाख वेटिंग लिस्ट बताई है। ऐसा नहीं है। एल.पी.जी. की वेटिंग लिस्ट १२७ लाख है। हम लोगों ने यह भी फैसला किया है कि तीन वर्ष में इसको बिल्कुल क्लीयर कर देंगे। जहां तक सांसद को मिलने का प्रश्न है तो यह बात सही है कि राज्य सभा के सांसदों को मिल रहा है लेकिन लोक सभा के सांसदों को नहीं मिल रहा है। हमारा मंत्रालय और हम इसे देने को तैयार हैं। स्पीकर साहब हमें जो भी निर्देश देंगे, उसके अनुरूप ही हम लोग कार्य करेंगे। हम इसमें रत्ती भर भी इख्तलाफ नहीं रखते कि नहीं दिया जाये। हम भी पहले सांसद हैं। हम भी चाहते हैं कि हम कैसे क्षेत्र की जनता को संतुष्ट करें। यह भी सही है कि देश की जनता के सामने एक सही बात आनी चाहिए। सांसद

अपने प्रिविलेज का दुरुपयोग तो नहीं कर रहा, यह बात हम सबके साथ बराबरी के साथ लागू है। इसलिए मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि हमने नीति तय कर रखी है। सत्ता में आने के बाद देश में लगा कि क्रूड की स्टोरेज कैपेसिटी बहुत कम है। इसको आने वाले समय में कैसे आगे बढ़ाया जाये, यह देखना है। पिछले तीन वर्षों से पूरे देश में एल.पी.जी. और रिटेल आउटलेटस के इंटरव्यू नहीं हुए हैं। इस समय पूरे देश में छः हजार से ज्यादा स्थान विज्ञापित हो चुके हैं और इनके इंटरव्यू बहुत जल्द प्रारंभ होने वाले हैं। इसमें पारदर्शिता बनी रहे इसलिए हमने गैर सरकारी व्यक्ति भी बोर्ड में नहीं रखे हैं। केवल रिटायर्ड जज चेयरमैन और ऑयल कम्पनी

के दो आदमी हैं। हमने उनको कहा है कि इंटरव्यू के २४ घंटों के अंदर निश्चित रूप से रिजल्ट डिक्लेयर करना पड़ेगा। इसके अलावा १४ स्थान होने के कारण जल्दी फैसले हो, हमने ५० बोर्ड बनाने का फैसला लिया है। वे बोर्ड बन गये हैं और उनकी प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ हो गयी है।

सभापति जी, मैं ज्यादा नहीं कहना चाहता परन्तु इतना जरूर कहना चाहता हूं कि हम सदन के प्रति जवाबदेह हैं और भविष्य में जो भी बात रही है, वर्तमान सरकार का लक्षय है कि हमारे मंत्रालय में बिल्कुल पारदर्शिता रहेगी। हमें गर्व है कि हमारी जो कम्पनियां हैं, वे नवरत्नों में सबसे ऊपर हैं और ओ.एन.जी.सी. को हिन्दुस्तान में ही नहीं बल्कि बाहर भी प्रतिष्ठा मिल रही है। अभी हमारे एक मित्र कह रहे थे कि गंगा बेसिन के अंदर तेल मिलने की संभावना है। हमारा मंत्रालय उसकी तलाश कर रहा है। बहुत जल्द अच्छे परिणाम हम इस दिशा में सदन और देश की जनता को देंगे। हम दिखा देंगे कि हमारा विभाग किस प्रकार से अच्छे ढंग से कार्य कर रहा है क्योंकि हमारी समझ में आता है कि हम जो उत्पादन करते हैं, वह हमारे लिए नाकाफी है। हमारा जो सेडीमैंट्री एरिया है, उसमें हम विस्तार करें। अभी हमारा ६६ परसेंट एरिया बचा हुआ है। हम उसमें कैसे अधिकतम एक्सप्लोरेशन करें, यह भी देखना है। आज दुनिया के सारे देशों के लोग हमारी ओर आकर्षित हो रहे हैं। वे चाहते हैं कि इस समय जो सरकार बनी है, उसके साथ सहयोग करके हम इस दिशा में प्रयास करें।

मुझे प्रसन्नता है कि यहां पर अधिकांश सदस्यों ने एन.ई.एल.पी. बिल के संदर्भ में जो अध्यादेश आया है, उसमें सहयोग दिया है। हम पिछली बार ही इसको पास करना चाहते थे परन्तु दुर्भाग्य से सदन में अन्य कार्यों के कारण हम इसको पास नहीं कर पाये इसलिए हमको अध्यादेश लाना पड़ा। वर्तमान सरकार अध्यादेश सरकार के रूप में काम करना नहीं चाहती। हम यह चाहते हैं कि हम जो भी काम करे, उसे पहले सदन में लेकर आयें, उसके बाद हम और कार्यवाही करें। आपने मुझे समय दिया, बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to the hon. Members from both sides of the House who have participated in the debate on Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 1998. I also express my sincere thanks to my colleague the Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for having intervened in the debate.

Sir, the hon. Members have in general agreed that our country needs more and more exploration. Our organisations like ONGC, IOC, OIC and other oil companies, are not in an adequate position to fulfil the demand of petroleum products which is growing every day in the country. It is high time that our country welcomed more investment and more technology into this field. We possess almost 90 per cent of the technology of exploration whether it is in onshore, offshore, shallow waters or in the deep-sea drilling. Though we possess certain technologies, we need those technologies which are very new to us. We want that those countries which are all possessing this new technology should come to India and participate in the exploration.

Sir, in the New Exploration Licencing Policy, there are three points involved. First is to invite more capital, either foreign capital or the joint ventures capital or the Indian capital. The capital should be invested more and more in the exploration ventures. Second is that while doing so, our country will get more crude oil. Third is that more areas will be covered under the exploration.

Sir, Shri T.R. Baalu, my predecessor, has said that the United Front Government was responsible for the opening up of this front for the private sector, particularly, foreigners to invest. I do not deny that fact. But he must also remember that during 1993 when Capt. Satish Sharma was the Petroleum Minister, it was he who had opened up this front. Even now, in the East coast and the West coast, a lot of private entrepreneurs and foreign multinationals are operating on off-shore as well as on-shore exploration. Under this New Exploration Licencing Policy, even though the United Front Government had identified 37 blocks, we have now further identified the blocks. It has come to 48 blocks both off-shore and on-shore as well as shallow water and deep sea water drilling.

Sir, to achieve this goal, we need this Bill to be amended because in the international arena when we go for a road show, it is highly necessary to know about the kind of concessions, tax concessions, tax holidays and royalty being fixed. The tax code is also necessary for the foreign investors to know what is available in this country. So, according to that, the previous United Front Government had envisaged this NELP. They had given an outlined picture. Then we had to amend the Income Tax Act, and it was amended.

Now, this Act also is to be amended and it is going to be amended by the House. Now, tax code is almost ready. By January or so, we are in a position to go for a road show in the 48 blocks. Already, the datas, tender forms and other things are being issued from the Ministry.

Sir, in this respect, some of our hon. Members have expressed their apprehension whether this will be misused by the authorities concerned. Here there is a clause 10 in the parent Act. It says:

"Every rule made under this Act and every notification issued under sub-section (4) of section 6A shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made or issued, before each House of Parliament, while it is in Session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one Session or in two or more successive Sessions, and if, before the expiry of the Session immediately following the Session or the successive Sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or notification or both Houses agree that the rule or notification should not be made or issued, the rule or notification shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule or notification."

However, any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity or anything previously done. So, under this amended Act, if at all any adjustment is made on the royalty or the rates of royalty, it is going to be notified and it is going to be laid before the House. So, I do not find any ground for any apprehension on that.

The hon. Member, Shri V.V. Raghavan wanted to know why we have now come to the House for passing this Bill after promulgating an Ordinance. Taking the House into confidence, I am informing the House that this is only an enabling provision and the Government has so far not acted on it even after the promulgation of the Ordinance. The other point which I would like to mention here is that this enabling provision is more advantageous to the States than the Centre.

Another apprehension was expressed by Shri V.V. Raghavan that the States were going to lose heavily before amending this Act. We have consulted all the State Governments by sending a gist of the amendments to them. All the State Governments except a few have agreed and the others are also sending their letters of agreement to the Government of India.

Here, we are amending only aspects that relate to off-shore exploration but not on-shore drilling. Even if we were fixing different rates of royalty for on-shore drilling, it will be done only in consultation with the States. It will not be done in an arbitrary manner. So, there is no question of misuse of power in fixing the rates of royalty or in making this amendment to be implemented. There will not be any misuse of authority.

The other point that some of the hon. Members have raised is that the State Governments will lose their revenue. Even Shri Satya Pal Jain has mentioned about it. We have been following the Administered Pricing Mechanism, that is, the `cost plus' formula till the 1st April, 1998. As the Kelkar Committee and the expert group have given a phased out liberalisation programme for the petroleum sector, we have dismantled the Administered Pricing Mechanism from the 1st April, 1998. It is no more followed except in respect of by-products. Accordingly, the prices which were already fixed by the Government on the basis of the Administered Pricing Mechanism have been completely dismantled. We are now following the import parity price. This has also necessitated the bringing in of this amendment. Hereinafter the rates of royalty cannot be fixed at random. We will go through it every month or every two or three months, whichever way we do it is beneficial to both sides.

We will take into account the international price and the import price in our country and we will fix the rates of royalty according to the import price parity. This is the international formula which is being followed everywhere. We have also fixed a minimum of 12.5 per cent as royalty. Nowhere in the world has this rate of royalty been offered for off-shore drilling.

Hon. Members have raised a point about the long queue of LPG consumers. I would like to mention - the hon. Minister of State has also made a mention of it - that 125 lakh people are in the queue.

Here, I would like to mention that the Government of India is extending Rs.72 per cylinder as subsidy for the domestic use. We have also opened up the parallel markets in LPG. But they were not in a position to offer this kind of a subsidy to the LPG consumers. Some of the unscrupulous parallel markets have also started the business like mushrooms and subsequently, they had shut down. Now, except four or five reputed firms which are running their parallel markets in LPG, others have shut down. Now only they are thriving and they are also not in a position to extend this kind of a subsidy. That is why, people are making a long queue with the Government distribution system, that is, from the oil companies.

Unfortunately, since there were cyclones in the Gujarat areas, one after another, in the last four or five months, the Vadiva Port has become unusable and we had to stop the import of LNG. Fortunately, with the alternate source from Chennai, Cochin and Haldia, we were able to augment the demand and we were able to maintain the supply.

As was assured by the Minister of State here, within the next two or three years, this queue will be exhausted. The old system of `tatkal' - that is, by depositing an amount of Rs.4000, one can get a priority in the LPG connections - is reintroduced and is continuing. For LPG, there is a growing demand. We are in a position to import and meet the demand, but unfortunately, infrastructural facilities particularly at Ports and also the pipelines are the handicaps. Otherwise, we would have been able to wipe off the waiting list, with all our resources in the oil companies.

Another point that has been raised was to supply unleaded petrol to all the places in the country. Now, only in the Metropolitan cities we are supplying the unleaded petrol. After the decision of the Supreme Court in connection with pollution, the oil companies have spent more than Rs.8000 crore to have some machineries and to reduce the sulphur content in diesel and also in unleaded petrol. In such a vast country, we were unfortunately not able to introduce the provision of unleaded petrol simultaneously at all the places. But we hope that, as per the direction of the Supreme Court, we will be able to supply unleaded petrol within two or three years to all the places in our country.

Another point that has been raised by some of the hon. Members is this.

श्री राजो सिंह : हाइ कोर्ट में लड़ना चाहिए। हाइ कोर्ट में किया है तो हाइ कोर्ट में लड़ना चाहिए।

... (व्यवधान)

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: I am coming to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please wait. The Minister will give the reply.

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: The hon. Member from Haldia has raised certain points regarding the liquefied natural gas which is the future of energy; now in the whole world, that has become the fuel for energy generation. In our country, we have planned about this and we have entrusted this matter with the Petronet LNG. Petronet LNG is the Consortium of our own oil companies; initially, we have started this at Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. These are the three places which have already been identified -- Dahej in Gujarat, Cochin in Kerala and Ennore in Chennai. In Dahej and Cochin, work is in progress. In Tamil Nadu, now the tender has been opened; and I am glad to say that the Consortium - consisting of Gas Authority of India Limited, Petronet LNG and Petronas of Malaysia - has been declared as L-1, that is, the lowest number one. These three companies have joined together to have that Consortium. So, I hope that the Government of Tamil Nadu would very soon issue orders and they will start the work.

I have also had a discussion with hon. Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. He is also taking initiative to have an LNG terminal at Kakinada. We have made a request to the hon. Chief Minister of West Bengal also. If the State Governments come forward to participate in the equity participation, like the Government of Kerala, the Government of Gujarat and the Government of Tamil Nadu, the Central Government, particularly the Petroleum Ministry is prepared to sanction any amount of LNG terminals. It is a sensitive issue.

SHRI LAKSHMAN CHANDRA SETH (TAMLUK): What about the Eastern region?

SHRI VAZHAPADI K. RAMAMURTHY: I have mentioned about Haldia. It is in the Eastern region.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA (ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS): What about the Andaman & Nicobar islands?

SHRI VAZHAPADI K. RAMAMURTHY: I have already said LNG terminals are taken up with the cooperation of the State Governments. The Gujarat Government, the Kerala Government and the Tamil Nadu Government are all equity participants. So, if your Government also participates in the equity participation, we are prepared to sanction LNG terminals. I am giving an assurance in the House.

16.56 hrs (Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

About further exploration in the farflung areas like Andaman & Nicobar islands, Lakshadweep and Himachal Pradesh, the seismic survey and all other things have been done. All these areas come under a block which has been identified for the New Exploration Licencing Policy. After completing these formalities for NELP, I hope, the foreign investors would be interested in India. From the interest which they have shown so far for getting the tender forms and other datas, I hope a large investment will come into our country in this sector and there will be some more improvement in our crude oil production. It would also reduce the burden on foreign exchange outflow.

With these few words I request the hon. House to pass the Amendment Bill.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY (VISAKHAPATNAM): The hon. Minister has given very extensive clarifications. But he could not fully satisfy the Members. He merely said that the reserves in Bombay High and other seashores is not enough to meet our demand. But the hon. Minister has forgotten that our country has got huge reserves. If we make efforts we would be able to achieve self-sufficiency.

During the tenure of the United Front Government in October last ONGC Videsh signed an MoU with China Oil and Gas Exploration Development Corporation. China had decided to explore 2,000 kilometres the contract for which it has decided to give to Asian countries. India wanted to take advantage of that. Shri T.R.Baalu feels that he has taken the initiative. We welcome that. We are also happy that the present hon. Ministerr is also taking pains to achieve results. So, it should not become an issue to score points. We want best results for our country.

Before I accept to withdraw, I would like to make one request. A comprehensive statement should be given to the House in the course of time by working out, how the country is going to achieve the maximum exploration in the next ten years by making use of the latest technology and capital from various countries of the world, like Australia, China and America.

17.00 hrs.

Secondly, besides depending on the ONGC or the OIC, who have done a great service for the nation, new organisations should crop up. It is a challenge for both the Ministry as well as the Government. It is for the Government to see how it is going to achieve all these and what is going to be the future demand and supply position of the country. Without having a pessimistic view, let us be optimistic and say that by determination, dedication, concentration and making maximum efforts anything is possible. We would be able to achieve the maximum goal. While initiating this Resolution, I did not find any fault with the Bill. I merely wanted a glorious success, in the field of oil, for our country which it needs the most. I request the Minister to give a comprehensive Report in due course of time. With these words I withdraw my Resolution.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY): I am thankful to the hon. Member, Dr. Reddy, for withdrawing his Statutory Resolution moved on this Bill. I assure the House that this Ministry will not leave any stone unturned.

Within the short time, we were able to progress in our dialogue and discussion and were able to sign protocol with various countries for joint venture equity participation in marketing as well as exploration in other

countries. With countries like the erstwhile USSR and now the CIS countries, particularly Azerbaijan, Caspian Sea countries, Turkmenistan and Moscow, we are in a position to progress at great length and we have signed some joint ventures with them. Moreover, during the South African Energy Conference, we were able to have bilateral talks with nine countries. China is one among them. We are not dropping any country because now the international oil price is very low. This is the time we should go abroad exploring more and more possibility of getting the crude and petroleum products. So, our strategy would be to accelerate exploration work within our country as also encourage more and more participation by India in other countries. By doing this we would be able to achieve self sufficiency in crude oil production. This is what we are aiming at.

As envisaged by Dr. Reddy, I would like to say, once NELP is completed we would be in a position to come up with a comprehensive policy and at that time we will definitely take the House into confidence.

the amendment pertains to royalty, I would like to know whether the apprehension of a number of States has been cleared or not. During the course of the discussion the Minister has informed the House that many States have agreed to it. I would like to know which are the States which have agreed, in particular about the States of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY: I would like to inform the House that so far, the State Governments of Rajasthan, UP, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh have given their concurrence to the terms and conditions of NELP and other States have informed that they would also convey their response to the Ministry shortly.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY (VISAKHAPATNAM): I seek leave of the House to withdraw my Statutory Resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the Resolution moved by Dr. Subbarami Reddy be withdrawn?

The Resolution was, by leave, withdrawn.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA (GUWAHATI): Sir, we welcome a Bill of this kind. The hon. Minister has covered many points at length. But I have some doubts about the usefulness of this Bill itself. Sir, as far as the exploration by ONGC and other organisations outside this country is concerned, certainly this Bill is useful. But so far as the domestic exploration of oil and gas reserves are concerned, many of the countries are reducing their exploitation of oil and gas reserves. But as against that we are opening up and are trying to exploit as much as possible knowing fully well that these reserves are restricted. It is there only for some time and one day it will be finished. So, we should also follow the other countries which are restricting and reducing the exploitation of oil and gas reserves.

I am on a different point now. This Bill may prove to be a barrier in fixing the royalty for the crude oil. Sir, as you know, my region has oil reserves. But the oil royalty that is paid to my State of Assam is the lowest. It is because if you compare the import price of oil and the royalty paid for the domestic crude oil to Assam and Gujarat, you would find that it is very less. It is just negligible. As a result of which our State is losing.

MR. SPEAKER: They have already covered these points. Please conclude.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Sir, I want that the royalty should increased. It should be brought at par with the price of imported crude oil.

Secondly, he has made a mention about the gas reserves also.

MR. SPEAKER: Again you are repeating the same thing.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Sir, I am not repeating it. I am on a different point now. This is regarding finished products. As you know, our region is a mountainous region. The shrinkage allowance is paid to the mountainous region where the petrol pumps are situated at very high altitude. This issue was taken up as back as 1992. But up till now, I do not know what is the result. All over India the shrinkage allowance is being paid. I do not know why it is not being paid in the North-Eastern region. I had raised this matter about three months back also. But up till now, no decision has been taken.

I request the hon. Minister to look into this seriously and take a decision about this.